DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 140 UD 032 860

TITLE "Getting Ready for Life" Survey Results 1996-97. Research Report on Survey Results.
INSTITUTION Houston Independent School District, TX.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Career Counseling; *Course Selection (Students); Decision Making; Extracurricular Activities; *Guidance; *High School Students; High Schools; Life Events; Resource Materials; *Student Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Houston Independent School District TX

ABSTRACT

"Getting Ready for Life: How To Make High School Work for You" is a guide to be used by Houston Independent School District (HISD) (Texas) high school students in making choices and describing their options related to course credits, academic programs, scholarships, extracurricular activities, employment opportunities, and preparing for career and college. A student survey was conducted to gather opinions of students about the usefulness of this resource book. A total of 665 completed student surveys were received, representing a return rate of about 45%. Over 50% of respondents were female. Overall, responses were positive. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they had a copy of the book. A majority, 65%, agreed or strongly agreed that it is a good investment to give students this kind of information. Recommendations include ensuring that school counseling and guidance staff make sure the book is available to students and conducting the student survey at the beginning of the spring semester to increase student responses. An appendix contains the student survey. (Contains three tables.) (SLD)

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RESEARCH

Reports on Survey Results

Department of Research and Accountability

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Getting Ready for Life Survey Results 1996–97

Houston Independent School District

UD032880

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Executive Summary

Getting Ready for Life Survey Results 1996–97

Introduction

Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You is a guide to be used by Houston ISD high school students in making choices and describing their options related to course credits, academic programs, scholarships, extracurricular activities, employment opportunities, and preparing for career and/or college. The book was distributed to 8 through 12 grade students during the 1996–97 school year. The goal of the project was to provide all high school students with the resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You,* and additionally to assess its usefulness.

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The agreement between HISD and the author of the resource book called for a student survey to gather the opinions of high school students regarding the usefulness of the resource book. The following research question was addressed:

> What were the opinions of Houston ISD high school students who were surveyed regarding the resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You*?

Findings

- A total of 655 completed student surveys were received. This constituted a return rate of approximately 45%. The number of completed surveys from the 9th grade was 281 surveys, the 10th grade 335 surveys, and no grade was reported for 39 surveys. Over 50% of the respondents were females.

- Overall, the responses were positive. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they had a copy of the book. A majority, 65%, of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it was a good investment to give students this kind of information.

Recommendations

1. Overall, the responses were positive. It is recommended that the Counseling and Guidance staff contact schools periodically to ensure the availability and the usage of the resource book.

2. To increase the return rate of student surveys, it is recommended to conduct the student survey at the beginning of the Spring semester.

Getting Ready for Life Survey Results 1996–97

Purpose: *To present the 9th and 10th grade student survey results for the resource book, Getting Ready for Life: How to make High School Work for You.*

Design: *Descriptive*

Population, Sample: *A purposive sample consisting of one high school from each Administrative District.*

Methods: *Student Survey responses were tallied and percents were computed for grades 9 and 10 combined and for each grade separately.*

Findings: *Overall, the responses were positive. A majority, 65%, of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it was a good investment to give students this kind of information.*

Conclusions: *The student survey results showed that the resource book, Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You, was beneficial to them. Information such as that discussed in the resource book should be disseminated to all secondary students.*

Introduction

Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You is a guide to be used by Houston ISD high school students in making choices and describing their options related to course credits, academic programs, scholarships, extracurricular activities, employment opportunities, and preparing for career and/or college. The book was distributed to 8 through 12 grade students during the 1996–97 school year. The goal of the project was to provide all high school students with the resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You* , and additionally to assess its usefulness.

Background

In Spring 1994, the Houston ISD distributed a book entitled *Super Summers: A Guidebook to Summer Opportunities for Teens*. This book presented reference information regarding summer recreational and enrichment activities, job opportunities, volunteering experiences, and other topics relevant for secondary students. *Super Summers* was given to students, free of charge, through the efforts of its author Dr. Susan Lieberman, HISD's Department of Publications and Administrative Services, and corporate contributors. Results of the survey, conducted to assess the impact and effectiveness of *Super Summers,* showed that the book was received favorably by students and counselors, and was considered useful in helping teens maximize their summer vacation time.

As a result of the success of *Super Summers,* Dr. Lieberman released the *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You* , another helpful book for Houston teenagers and their parents.

With the help of 40 Milby High School students, most of whom were enrolled in 11th and 12th grade psychology classes, Dr. Lieberman gained perspectives on various issues important to today's youth, such as student attitudes, school rules, fighting, failure, career choices, and peer pressure.

The resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You,* was researched and written during the 1995–96 school year for middle and high school students in HISD under the auspices of Super Summers, Inc.

The following are some of the activities initiated to publicize the usefulness of the book:

- Information flyers in English and Spanish were developed for distribution to high school students and parents. Additional flyers, with cover letters, were sent to PTO/PTAs for distribution at various parent functions.
- A video tape series featuring students focusing on key issues discussed in the book were developed at various HISD high schools.
- A helpful guide to supplement the resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You* , was developed and distributed to counselors.
- Schools have featured the book on College Nights, held contest to design promotional "jingles", wrote featured articles in school newspapers, and made a series of Public Service announcements.

The HISD Counseling and Guidance Department conducted a survey of counselors regarding the book in January 1997. A survey was sent to 31 schools and completed surveys from 26 schools were received. The survey included questions on how the book was distributed to students, if information was shared with parents, and how the book was used. The results were positive and recommended continued use of the book. Also, over 10 schools volunteered to become taping sites for the video series of the book and gave suggestions for future use.

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The agreement between HISD and the author of the resource book called for a student survey to gather the opinions of high school students regarding the usefulness of the resource book. The following research question was addressed:

> What were the opinions of Houston ISD high school students who were surveyed regarding the resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You*?

Methods

A student survey was developed to gather information on students' opinion about the resource book. In March and April of 1997, the Counseling and Guidance Department piloted the survey at three high schools. The survey included questions on the availability and overall usefulness of the book. The section on the usefulness of the book employed statements to which respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed. The survey was prepared on National Computer Systems (NCS) form. A purposive sample consisting of one high school from each Administrative District was selected. The lead counselor and or a designee at each high school distributed and collected the completed surveys. The responses were tallied and the results were tabulated. Percents do not always add up to 100.

The student survey (see **Appendix**) was conducted in May, 1997. Participating schools were asked to select two 9th grade and two 10th grade classes to be surveyed. Approximately 120 surveys, an average of 30 students per class, were mailed to each school. A total of 655 completed student surveys were received. This constituted a return rate of approximately 45%. The number of completed surveys from the 9th grade was 281 surveys, the 10th grade 335 surveys, and no grade was reported for 39 surveys. Over 50% of the respondents were females.

At six of the schools, the number of surveys received for 10th grade was higher than that for the 9th grade and at three of the schools the number of surveys received for 9th grade was higher than that for the 10th grade. No surveys were received from one school. According to information received from that school over the telephone, the resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to make High School Work for you*, was not distributed on time for students to complete the survey.

Results

What were the opinions of Houston ISD high school students who were surveyed regarding the resource book, *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You*,?

The total number of surveys received was 655. The tally of the responses from all of the 655 respondents is presented in **Table 1.** Blanks or no response are included in the "Don't Know" category. The number and percent of respondents for each statement is given.

Overall the responses were positive. Although 16% of the respondents gave more than one answer, 27% indicated that they had a copy of the book. A

Table 1: Number and Percent of All Respondents

I General Information:	n	%
1. I have a copy of this book.	174	27
2. Other students have a copy of the book but I don't.	41	6
3. I have a copy of this book but I have never used it.	87	13
4. I looked at the book but it didn't seem useful.	33	5
5. I have a copy of this book and I am using it.	118	18
6. I have never seen this book.	79	12
Blank	16	3
Multiple Answers	107	16

II Usage of the book:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't Know	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
7. I noticed that other students were reading the book and talking about it with interest.	28	4	208	32	121	19	109	17	189	29
8. I believe many students read some parts of the book and benefited from it.	61	9	305	47	56	9	54	8	179	27
9. I learned about programs and activities I did not previously know about.	73	11	226	35	144	22	70	11	142	20
10. There is no other place where students can get this kind of information as easily.	53	8	130	20	195	30	71	11	206	32
11. What I liked the most about this book is that it includes the information I need in one place.	83	13	249	38	76	12	43	7	204	31
12. There is something in this book for just about everybody.	95	15	257	39	49	8	42	6	212	32
13. I shared the book with my parents.	26	4	106	16	208	32	212	32	103	16
14. My parents read some parts or all of the book.	23	4	75	12	186	28	229	35	142	22
15. I think that it is a good investment to give students this kind of information	228	35	193	30	27	4	48	7	159	24

majority, 65%, of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it was a good investment to give students this kind of information. Over 50% agreed or strongly agreed with the following three statements: (1) that they believed many students read some parts of the book and benefited from it; (2) what they liked the most about this book was that it included the information they need on one place; and (3) that there was something in this book for just about everybody.

The tally of the responses for the 281 respondents in grade 9 is presented in **Table 2.** The "Don't Know" category includes blanks or no response and the percent of respondents is calculated using the total number of surveys minus the 39 surveys that did not have a grade level. The number and percent of respondents for each statement is given.

Eleven percent of the 9th graders who completed the survey indicated that they have a copy of the book. A higher percentage (30%) of the respondents agreed

Table 2: Number and Percent of Respondents for Grade 9

I General Information:	n	%
1. I have a copy of this book.	66	11
2. Other students have a copy of the book but I don't.	18	3
3. I have a copy of this book but I have never used it.	30	5
4. I looked at the book but it didn't seem useful.	15	2
5. I have a copy of this book and I am using it.	57	10
6. I have never seen this book.	44	7
Blank	7	1
Multiple Answers	44	7

II Usage of the book:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't Know	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
7. I noticed that other students were reading the book and talking about it with interest.	9	1	96	16	53	9	47	8	74	12
8. I believe many students read some parts of the book and benefited from it.	19	3	135	22	26	4	21	3	80	13
9. I learned about programs and activities I did not previously know about.	27	3	100	16	58	9	42	7	54	9
10. There is no other place where students can get this kind of information as easily.	18	4	52	8	93	15	27	4	93	15
11. What I liked the most about this book is that it includes the information I need in one place.	31	3	110	18	26	4	15	2	99	16
12. There is something in this book for just about everybody.	34	5	118	19	19	3	22	6	88	14
13. I shared the book with my parents.	8	1	32	5	76	12	112	18	53	9
14. My parents read some parts or all of the book.	5	1	23	4	74	12	115	19	64	10
15. I think that it is a good investment to give students this kind of information	95	15	83	14	12	2	21	3	70	11

or strongly agreed with the statement that it was a good investment to give students this kind of information. Twenty-five percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that they believed many students read some parts of the book and benefited from it, and that there was something in this book for just about everybody.

The tally of the responses for the 335 respondents in grade 10 is presented in **Table 3.** Blanks or no response are included in the "Don't Know" category and the percent of respondents is calculated using the total number or surveys minus the 39 surveys that did not have a grade level. The number and percent of respondents for each statement is given.

Sixteen percent of the 10th graders who completed a student survey indicated that they have a copy of the book. A higher percentage (37%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it was a good investment to give students

Table 1.3: Number and Percent of Respondents for Grade 10

I General Information:	n	%
1. I have a copy of this book.	102	16
2. Other students have a copy of the book but I don't.	22	3
3. I have a copy of this book but I have never used it.	42	9
4. I looked at the book but it didn't seem useful.	13	2
5. I have a copy of this book and I am using it.	59	9
6. I have never seen this book.	32	5
Blank	9	1
Multiple Answers	56	9

II Usage of the book:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't Know	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
7. I noticed that other students were reading the book and talking about it with interest.	19	3	10	17	61	10	55	9	96	16
8. I believe many students read some parts of the book and benefited from it.	42	7	154	25	26	4	29	5	83	13
9. I learned about programs and activities I did not previously know about.	45	7	117	19	76	12	24	4	73	12
10. There is no other place where students can get this kind of information as easily.	35	6	71	12	93	15	39	6	96	16
11. What I liked the most about this book is that it includes the information I need in one place.	49	8	131	21	45	7	26	4	84	14
12. There is something in this book for just about everybody.	56	9	129	21	27	4	19	3	104	17
13. I shared the book with my parents.	17	3	68	11	120	20	90	15	40	17
14. My parents read some parts or all of the book.	17	3	47	8	103	17	102	17	66	7
15. I think that it is a good investment to give students this kind of information	123	20	102	17	14	2	25	4	71	11

this kind of information. Over 30% responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that they believed many students read some parts of the book and benefited from it, and that there was something in this book for just about everybody.

Recommendations

1. Overall, the responses were positive. It is recommended that the Counseling and Guidance staff contact schools periodically to ensure the availability and the usage of the resource book
2. To increase the return rate of student surveys, it is recommended that the survey be conducted at the beginning of the Spring semester.

Appendix

Houston Independent School District
Resource Book Student Survey
1996–1997

Marking Instructions
- Use number 2 pencil only.
- Make dark marks that fill the circle completely.
- Erase clearly any mark you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks.

INCORRECT MARKS ⊘ ⊗ ⊖ ⊙ CORRECT MARK ●

The Department of Counseling and Guidance would like to have your opinions about the *Getting Ready for Life: How to Make High School Work for You* resource book. Please complete the survey as fully as you can. The information will be used to make decisions about future editions. Your responses are anonymous and will not be used to evaluate you or your school. Your completion of this survey is greatly appreciated.

School: _____

Are you : Male ○ Female ○ Grade Level 9 ○ 10 ○

I. General Information: Please fill the circle by the statement that best desscribes your answer.

1. I have a copy of this book. ○
2. Other students have a copy of the book but I don't. ○
3. I have a copy of this book but I have never used it. ○
4. I looked at the book but it didn't seem useful. ○
5. I have a copy of this book and I am using it. ○
6. I have never seen this book. ○

II. Usage of the book: Please indicate whether you "Strongly Agree", "Agree," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree" with the following statements. If you do not have enough information to respond, fill in the circle under "Don't Know."

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
7. I noticed that other students were reading the book and talking about it with interest.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I believe many students read some parts of the book and benefited from it.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I learned about programs and activities I did not previously know about.	○	○	○	○	○
10. There is no other place where students can get this kind of information as easily.	○	○	○	○	○
11. What I liked the most about this book is that it includes the information I needed in one place.	○	○	○	○	○
12. There is something in this book for just about everybody.	○	○	○	○	○
13. I shared the book with my parents.	○	○	○	○	○
14. My parents read some parts or all of the book.	○	○	○	○	○
15. I think that it is a good investment to give students this kind of information.	○	○	○	○	○

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